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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000722

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [EPET](#) [ENRG](#) [EG](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: MUBARAK VISIT LONG ON RHETORIC, SHORT ON
SUBSTANCE

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Turkish MFA and Egyptian embassy officials described the March 22-23 visit of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to Turkey as "symbolically important" and "a useful exchange between two regional powers." Despite agreement by both countries to establish a structured "strategic dialogue," neither the Turks nor the Egyptians characterized the visit as being particularly substantive. The Egyptians, in fact, were somewhat bemused by the degree to which GOT officials focused on Egypt's agreement with Cyprus on oil and gas exploration. Turkey, meanwhile, was happy to have the opportunity to showcase improved bilateral ties with what has historically been (and still is to a degree) a regional competitor. END SUMMARY

12. (C) MFA officers said the Egyptians had pressed hard for a Mubarak visit, and the Turks had offered up the March timeframe after Egyptian FM Aboul Gheit's January 2007 visit to Ankara. He last visited Turkey in February 2004, while Turkish President Sezer paid a reciprocal visit to Cairo in December 2005. Mubarak came with a sizable coterie in tow, including FM Gheit, Petroleum Minister Sameh Fahmi, and ministers of Industry and Commerce, and of Investment. They met with Sezer, PM Erdogan, FM Gul, and Chief of General Staff Gen. Yasar Buyukanit. The meeting with Buyukanit was somewhat out of the norm for heads of state/government visiting Turkey but Egyptian diplomats said the meeting was "routine" for Mubarak since he is a "military man." They added that the Mubarak/Buyukanit had a "good dynamic" and focused on regional security issues.

13. (C) Turkish MFA Egypt desk officer Burcu Erdogdu said the visit was a public demonstration that Turkey's bilateral relationship with Egypt remains strong and allowed for the "repair of possible damage" stemming from Egypt's 2005 agreement on cooperation with Cyprus on oil and gas exploration. The ROC has sold seismic data in anticipation of launching a tender license round based on the EEZ border established with Egypt in 2003. The GOT continues to try to scuttle these plans by stressing geologic and economic uncertainty and political risk associated with it. According to Erdogdu, GOT officials had urged Egypt to "be sensitive to Turkish concerns" regarding the deal with Cyprus, to which the Egyptians had stated that the agreement with Cyprus was "still being worked on." They agreed to continue discussing the issue, with Egyptian Energy Minister Hassan Younes scheduled to visit Turkey in the near future and an Egyptian

technical team planning to delve into details of the Egypt-Cyprus agreement along with a Turkish team in April. While the GOT might believe they exercised a light touch in pointing out their concerns with the Egyptians' deal with Cyprus, Egyptian diplomats in Ankara said Mubarak and his delegation were exasperated by the end of the visit, having heard about Turkish concerns regarding the deal at every stop. The GOT's "overreaction" had touched a raw nerve with Mubarak. The Egyptian embassy made clear Egypt has no intention of abrogating the deal with Cyprus. Meanwhile, both countries reconfirmed their commitment to the Arab Gas Pipeline deal that will bring Egyptian gas via Jordan and Syria to Turkey and beyond (timing for completion of the Syria portion is still unclear).

¶4. (C) Both Erdogan and Egyptian embassy officials said the visit was short on deliverables, but one new initiative that did arise from it was the establishment of a strategic cooperation commission. The proposed joint body would be chaired at the MFA Deputy Under Secretary level and meet periodically to exchange views on various topics, especially those related to regional security but also including economic and cultural issues as well. The two countries already have a joint economic cooperation commission and signed a free trade agreement in 2005. Erdogan said bilateral trade levels topped \$1.5 billion last year and both countries are looking to increase that substantially in coming years.

¶5. (C) The focus of discussions in most meetings was the unstable situation in the immediate neighborhood of both countries. In press statements after the meetings, Sezer said both presidents attached great importance to preserving Iraq's territorial integrity and national unity. They also

extended their mutual support "to regional and international efforts to resolve the Palestinian issue."

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Officials of both countries agree the fact the visit happened at all was a useful step in continuing dialogue at the highest levels between the two countries while containing disagreements that are a natural part of the relationship between two regional powers. The establishment of a strategic dialogue mechanism can only help to facilitate communication between the two historical rivals. We will have to wait to see how Egypt's deal with Cyprus impacts the relationship in the long-term.

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